The OECD and progress - full post

Posted on 6 September 2011

This post provides you with some information on what the OECD - one of the major players in the field of measuring societal progress, is currently doing.

The OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) has been one of the main international drivers for the growing interest in measuring societal progress beyond narrow economic measures such as GDP. It's an organisation aimed at identifying good practice in, coordinating domestic and international policy, and stimulating economic progress and world trade. It has 34 member countries.

The OECD has several key initiatives in measuring societal progress.

Wikiprogress and ProgBlog

One way the OECD is informing and facilitating an exchange of ideas in the field of measuring progress is through wikiprogress and its off-shoot blog ProgBlog. They are an excellent way to keep up-to-date with what is happening internationally in the push to go "beyond GDP". You can find out about the different projects in other countries, share your thoughts with like-minded individuals, and learn from experts and practitioners if you are interested in developing initiatives in this field. Wikiprogress is the official platform for the OECD-hosted Global Project on Measuring the Progress of Societies. It is open to all members and communities for contribution.

Better Life Initiative

As part of the Better Life Initiative, the OECD recently released 'Your Better Life Index'. It's an interactive tool designed to compare wellbeing across countries based on 11 topics that are considered essential to quality of life. It allows people to rate those 11 topics according to how important they think each topic is. This way, it is not the OECD who is making a judgement when determining the progress scores, but the individual.

Related to the index is the Compendium of OECD wellbeing indicators. It allows people to compare indicators across different countries. It is the preview to the type of publication the OECD is planning to release in October 2011 called "How's life?".

"How's life?" is a report that will gather and analyse indicators on the wellbeing of individuals and households, based on the dimensions identified in the Stiglitz Commission Report. The ABS has been providing advice to OECD on this publication.

OECD World Forum

As part of the Global Project on Measuring the Progress of Societies, the OECD has hosted 3 World Forums. The first was in Palermo, Italy in 2004; the second in Istanbul, Turkey in 2007; and the third in Busan, Korea in 2009. A fourth world forum is planned for 2012 in India. Our aim is to report on the outcomes of the MAP 2.0 consultation by the time of the 4th World Forum.

The ABS has been working closely with OECD in measuring progress. For example, we have been advising and commenting on OECD's initiative to measure subjective wellbeing. The ABS collects a range of information on subjective wellbeing. If you'd like to know more about subjective wellbeing you might like to read this definition of subjective wellbeing by the OECD or this definition by the UN.

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Just had a play with the OECD Better Life Index. What fun! This type of interactive data interpretation is a great learning tool and helps present otherwise boring stats in a user friendly manner. Nice to see Australia does well generally, regardless of the priroities I put in forthe various indices

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